

## TWO LAYERS OF GOLD

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TREUMA

“ועשו לי מקדש ושכנתי בתוכם” . . . “And they shall build a sanctuary unto me and I will dwell in their midst.” (Chapter 19, Verse 8)

Dear Friends: Today we read in the Torah of the first drive in Jewish history for the construction of a “Mikdosh,” a House of G-d — which was to symbolize the Divine Presence amongst the Jewish people. The first holy vessel which was ordered was an “Oron” — a box or case which was to contain the tablets with the Ten Commandments and a Torah Scroll. “Vaosu Aron Atsei Shittim” . . . “And they shall make a box of ‘shittim’ wood.

What is most striking about this holy ark is its construction — “וצפית אותו זהב טהור” — “and thou shalt cover it with gold; on its inner and outer surfaces it should be covered.” (Verse 11) The box that encased the most important treasures of our spirit — the Tablets and the Scroll — was to be a wooden one with two layers of gold — one on the inside and one on the outside. I believe, dear friends, that this stratification of the holy ark symbolizes a basic Jewish approach. Man, too, is a vessel which has the G-dly mission of carrying the Torah Scroll. He, too, is a tray displaying the Ten Commandments and what they stand for. Man must be a *living* Oran Kodesh. But, man too, is as the Shittim tree of which the box was made. Much of his behavior, many of his characteristics are determined by his natural needs. Just as the tree, he must

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obtain his nourishment from the soil; as the tree he is exposed to the tempestuous forces of nature. His struggle for security, for the protection of his family make him "wooden" — as the Shittim tree. But, this wooden case may be adorned and glorified by two layers of gold. These inner and outer layers of gold can sparkle with a lustre and a brilliance which will obscure the wood — as necessary and as important as it may be.

Man's inner thoughts and impressions, his intellectual and emotional adventures into the realms of the sublime form his inner greatness — the inner layer of gold. His outward expressions in deeds and symbols, in acts of kindness, in acts that conform with the will of G-d — these form the outer layer of gold. But, both are interdependent. Lofty thoughts and feelings may project man into the stratosphere of the spirit but not for too long a duration — not for long can he hover over the crown of the Shittim tree. Soon he must return helplessly into his wooden case. Outward expression, the indulgence in the symbolic without experiencing the deeper significance becomes a dry routine, a sterile ritual, leaving the wooden case — not adorned but uncomfortably burdened.

"From the inside and the outside it shall be covered with gold;" then it will be able to carry the Sefer Torah, then its teachings and ideas will live in it. ועשו לי מקדש "And they shall build a sanctuary unto me as an outward expression but at the same time ושכנתי בתוכם — I must dwell in them — in their hearts and minds!